

Ascham said long ago: "Learning teacheth more in one year than experience in twenty . . . he hazardeth sore that waxeth wise by experience." I am speaking rather of the cumulative effect of constant association between teacher and student at all levels of experience, in and out of the classroom, in situations where knowledge and wisdom furnish a ready answer, and in situations where they do not. Undergraduates are largely influenced by the personalities with whom they have the most immediate and prolonged association. Generally these are members of a fraternity or sorority. Most American students live in a world which is quite different from the normal adult world. They associate almost wholly for four years with people of their own age group, often only of their own sex, and very often only of their own interests. At graduation they are suddenly precipitated into a new kind of life, of business, conflict and competition, worry and responsibility, where the things they have studied seem to have little application. Black Mountain College tries to prepare students for life by carrying on learning in an environment of normal human activities. It offers something like adult education, in a community where the main emphasis is upon study but where the work of the world plays an active role.

The road to self-discipline, maturity, and competence is long and hard. The kind of education Black Mountain attempts is not an easy one. Of course the surest way to get efficiency in administering a community would be to establish a permanent bureaucracy of faculty members who knew the work and could despatch it quickly. Effective routines would be set up and conflicts avoided.

This, however, does not lead to maturity of judgment and action, or to civic responsibility in a tangled world where established forms and values are vanishing. We need citizens who have toughness of mind, a capacity for meeting the unexpected with clear eyes, and a steadiness of purpose that is based on the sure knowledge derived from experience, understanding, and practical competence.

Academic Program

The aim of the college in the academic area is to give students a sound introduction to major subjects that lie in the four areas of the curriculum, and to develop sufficient grasp of a special field so that a student may be able to form independent judgments within it. Work is divided into the junior and the senior divisions, each usually taking two years of the student's time. Completion of work in each division is determined by means of comprehensive examinations and faculty consideration of the individual student's progress.

In the junior division a student studies central subjects in each of the four areas. These may vary somewhat according to his interests. He should gain sufficient knowledge in these areas so that he can choose intelligently that special field in which he is most interested